

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 14, 2005

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accounting Office
Room 7100
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General:

It has come to our attention that convicted criminals, currently within the custody of state correctional authorities, are filing fraudulent tax returns in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 7206. We are seeking a Government Accounting Office (GAO) investigation into the extent to which this matter is also occurring in federal prisons.

Recent news reports in Florida have revealed that state prison inmates are filing tax returns and even collecting refunds for work they could not have performed due to their incarceration during the same period. At times they cite fictitious companies as employers, but they also use real companies that have no record of ever employing their services.

While initial reports are focused on inmates within the Florida Department of Corrections, it seems likely that these crimes are not limited to Florida and are instead being committed in state and federal prisons throughout the country—especially due to the nature of these crimes, and the easy access to information and tools necessary to perpetrate them. And, as the recent security breaches at private companies responsible for safeguarding the personal data of millions of Americans have shown us, identity theft and fraud crimes are growing increasingly common. These crimes provide criminals great rewards with only nominal risks and penalties.

It is our request that the GAO act quickly to investigate this problem and to determine the full extent of these crimes being committed within our federal penal institutions. The American public is entitled to know how convicted criminals are able to commit new crimes against the public and taxpayers while in government custody.

It is unacceptable for the American public to be victimized repeatedly by criminals in state and/or federal custody. In light of our obligation to serve and protect the interests of American taxpayers, it is vital that we act quickly to shut down this financial scam and determine the most efficient means to do so.

Sincerely,



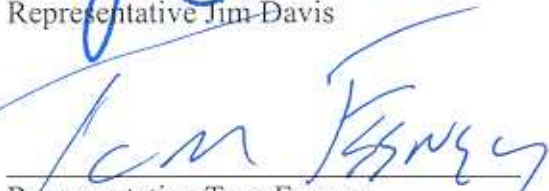
Senator Bill Nelson



Representative Jim Davis



Representative Ric Keller



Representative Tom Feeney